

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, December 2, 2013

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: William O'Dell, Chair, Diana Campbell and Lynn Wainwright

School Committee, Administration & Guests: Karen Lynch (6:58 p.m.), John Saviano (6:33 p.m.), Paul Silva (7:11 p.m.), and Mario Andrade, Asst. Superintendent

Meeting called to order by Bill O. at 6:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Diana C. motioned to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2013 meeting; Lynn W. seconded.

DISCUSSION: Lynn W. asked for clarification from Mario A. concerning the content the school nurses will be uploading to the District website. Mario A. responded that the nurses will be creating their own information based on RIDE protocols and procedures.

The motion passed unanimously.

Health and Wellness Policy

Lynn W. stated for the record that the Subcommittee had not been asked to remove references to curriculum as was stated at a prior meeting. She referred back to Chairman Silva's comments during the last School Committee Meeting where he asked the Policy Subcommittee to "take a look at anything to do with curriculum to make sure toes are not being stepped on and if so, to remove those sections." Lynn W. then referred to the recommendations of the District Solicitor following his review of the Health and Wellness Policy where he suggested minor wordsmithing changes. She reiterated that Andrew H. raised no issues concerning curriculum references within the policy. Bill O. responded that Andrew H. specifically reviewed the policy from a legal standpoint where Paul S. was looking at it from a relationship standpoint. Lynn W. commented that she believes it is appropriate to leave references to curriculum within the body of the policy. Diana C. commented that she believes leaving the curriculum references in would be "stepping on toes" because the School Committee cannot dictate how and when curriculum is used. Lynn W. responded she disagreed citing the Healthy Hunger Act of 2010. Diana C. commented that the School Committee can state goals and standards, but cannot tell the educators how it should be done. Mario A. stated it is important to determine how curriculum is defined. The District develops curriculum to fit into the guidelines that have been established. He added that this policy outlines those standards. Mario A. stated for clarification that the "what" can be determined by the School Committee, but not the "how". Bill O. responded that his statement

was accurate. Mario A. commented that when he thinks of curriculum, he sees it as Scope and Sequence. Diana C. commented that just because curriculum pieces are not stated in the policy does not mean it is lost because it is already embedded in the curriculum which the educators follow. Lynn W. stated that the original Health and Wellness Policy she was given to work with included all the references to curriculum that are currently being questioned. Lynn W. stated she gave the most recent revised policy to Korin at RIDE for her review to ensure federal guidelines are still being addressed within the policy. Lynn W. added that the new law mandates certain items be included in the policy. Lynn W. stated that the Wellness Subcommittee was on board, for the most part, with the changes to the Health and Wellness Policy.

Lynn W. listed the following additional changes that were requested by the Wellness Committee:

- Make captions “Policy Intent”, “District Health and Wellness Subcommittee” and “District’s Nutrition Standards” bold.
- Under “Membership”, “Optional members may include at a minimum” a bullet stating “School Physical Education/Health Educator”
- Remove second paragraph on page 3.
- Re-insert sentence in paragraph under #3 Student Nutrition Education, “To be effective, nutrition education for children should be appropriate for the students’ ages, reflect their cultures and provide

opportunities for them to practice nutrition skills and have fun.”

- Remove the word “served” from the first paragraph under #4 Snacks, Beverages and Fundraising.**

Lynn W. stated the above referenced paragraph is a gray area that the Federal Government is leaving to schools to decide. She also added that parties are included in that gray area. Lynn W. stated the reason behind removing “served” was to make it very black and white to avoid interpretation issues between schools. Diana C. added it is important to be consistent throughout the schools in the District citing the example of one school having cupcakes where the other one does not. Lynn W. stated the Wellness Committee would prefer that any food items in the classroom be related to curriculum. Bill O. asked why cupcakes are being addressed if there is no federal law concerning this. Lynn W. responded the goal is to have healthier food choices which she added Rockwell has been implementing for a while.

- Lynn W. proposed the following wording replace the existing first paragraph under #7 Celebrations/Events: “Classroom celebrations/events should not be centered on food, except if the food items are part of a curriculum related activity. While not prohibited, parties should be planned to discourage consumption of unhealthy food items and encourage food items that comply with RI Nutrition Guidelines for School Vending and A La Carte Foods.”**

Bill O. is concerned that the above paragraph specifically references curriculum. Lynn W. responded that the teachers requested this item be included. Mario A. stated he attended the meeting where this was discussed. He would like to see the word “birthdays” removed because a celebration or event is more school focused. Mario A. feels there must be a purpose behind a celebration to improve student achievement.

- Under “Student Physical Activity”, add the following bullet item: “Availability and use of the middle and high school’s fitness centers during non-school hours is encouraged.”**

Lynn W. feels that recess needs to be defined since there is none at the middle and high school level. Mario A. mentioned a letter that was signed by a majority of the teachers at Rockwell. They cited the example of a teacher who may need to carry over instructional time with a student into recess to ensure understanding of a concept; would this policy restrict them from doing so. He said the teachers are concerned about interpretation by the parents. Lynn W. stated it is important to be very specific in how the policy is worded to ensure practical implementation. Bill O. questioned why the policy would get into this type of minutia. Mario A. suggested that once the policy is approved, he could send out a memo giving the correct interpretation of the discipline statement as it is related to recess. Diana C. also suggested sending the interpretation explanation to administrators and parents explaining it would not be a violation of the policy were

instruction time to extend into recess.

Lynn W. asked about the legal references. Mario A. will review. Diana C. would also like to see a hyperlink placed in the policy for those laws referenced.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion pending review of legal references and minor changes to the document to move the Health and Wellness Policy to the full School Committee for a second reading; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Procedure Policy (Proposed)

Bill O. stated that Paul S. emailed a revised document that was slightly different than the original proposed Administrative Procedure which he re-titled "Oversight Policy". Paul S. stated by way of review that at the beginning of the year two individuals on the School Committee raised a concern when the high school student handbook had been changed without the School Committee reviewing first. This policy is an attempt to ensure an issue like this doesn't arise again. Paul S. stated he tried to encompass any group within the school system such as administration, faculty, or the School Improvement Team so that anything enacted by them whether it be rules or procedures, must come through the School Committee for approval prior to implementation. Paul S. highlighted the new changes to the document stating the first paragraph addresses changes to existing procedures; the second paragraph would

address any new procedures and the last paragraph would be a “catch all” for modifications to any procedures. Paul S. commented that he left out the word “policy” referencing a comment Marj M. had made stating that the School Committee is the only entity that can enact a policy.

Bill O. stated he was not comfortable moving this policy forward as he only saw the revised document this evening. He stated he has questions. He does not see how administrators are in violation if they do not come through the School Committee. Bill O. handed out the School Building Administration Policy (CF) which he stated contradicts the proposed Oversight Policy. Policy CF states that high school administration would establish the rules with approval from the Superintendent. It basically states site management will handle. Karen L. asked why the high school has been coming through the School Committee for approval of the handbook if Policy CF states otherwise. Bill O. stated a determination will need to be made on which approach the School Committee will adopt. Karen L. asked what would be considered a rule. Diana C. responded she sees that the School Committee makes the policy and sets the direction. It would then be up to the Administration to say this is what the School Committee desires. They would then be responsible to establish rules to comply with the direction of the School Committee. Mario A. asked if the proposed policy would be manageable. Bill O. added if everything goes to the School Committee, what would become of the Administration/Superintendent relationship. John S. commented that

Administrators are hired because they are the experts. Diana C. stated when the issues of the handbook arose, we weren't questioning their professionalism. She added that the Administrators work for the School Committee. John S. responded the Administrators make recommendations based on what they have observed to work in practice. Bill O. stated this comes down to the definition of curriculum. Bill O. understands there is a problem that needs to be fixed.

Paul S. stated that he sees the proposed Oversight Policy as related to students only. He continued that Policy CF is more global dealing with how Administration deals with staff, and the conduct of the students on an ongoing basis. Paul S. added even with Policy CF, the general content deals with the discipline code, student handbook, etc. all of which comes through the School Committee.

John S. stated there was a subcommittee of the SIT Team which created the handbook changes. Melinda T. was a part of this subcommittee. The Subcommittee then brought the proposed changes to the SIT Team for their approval. After that, the normal protocol of presenting those changes to the School Committee did not take place which is where the error happened with the handbook. John S. continued that if the normal protocol had been followed, misinformation would have never been disseminated to the parents. It would have been caught and modifications made. Paul S. stated the protocol was missed because an official protocol was not in

place.

Bill O. stated this policy can be entertained as a new one and can be tweaked at the next meeting at which time it can then be moved to the full committee for a first reading. Diana C. commented she likes the spirit of the policy. She would like to have Andrew H. and the Administration look at the policy for ways to implement. Mario A. stated he will research what the existing policies are to narrow the scope of what goes before the School Committee. He would like to identify those items that are not being abided by and to look for any gaps in the system which need to be defined. Mario A. will review and bring his findings to the next meeting.

SIT Policy

Lynn W. asked what the prescribed regulations are which are referenced in the SIT Policy. Paul S. responded there currently are none. Diana C. stated this is the first time the SIT Team Policy (CN) is being presented for approval to go on for a first reading at the full committee level. Paul S. stated that guidelines needed to be established by the State so they weren't so self-determined. This is why School Committee's are mentioned within this policy. Mario A. stated School Improvement Teams go back 20 years to Article 31. He added this is all Professional Development money. SIT has morphed from there. Mario A. commented that SIT teams were not involved in Academic Eligibility, but were more related to student achievement. Karen L. commented she thought it was about school environment.

Paul S. stated over the years nothing has been written to establish procedures. As a result, he stated that total compliance is lacking. Lynn W. asked who defines the SIT plans. Diana C. responded whatever a school decides needs improvement is what would be worked on. Mario A. commented one of the goals of the SIT team is to increase graduation rates. He added that he receives SIT plans from each of the schools in Rhode Island.

Bill O. stated the policy simply states the Rhode Island General Law concerning School Improvement Teams. Lynn W. commented she has a problem with citing laws that are not being implemented by the District. Diana C. responded by accepting and approving this policy, from this point forward, the District will be abiding by this policy. Lynn W. stated since there are no regulations, the cart is being put before the horse. She suggests holding off until regulations are in place. Lynn W. asked if a District SIT Team would be created. Diana C. responded the law states “may” establish a District SIT Team, not “will establish”. She added this would be something Paul S. would bring before the School Committee. Bill O. commented that he did not understand the logic of making a policy for something that is currently not being done.

Bill O. stated the only objection at the first reading was quoting the law in the body of the policy because the law can change. Bill O. reiterated Paul S. suggestion of adding “as amended from time to time” with a hyperlink included to the Rhode Island General Law.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion to move The SIT Policy (CN) to a second reading of the full committee pending revisions; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

School Admissions Policy (JEC)

Bill O. stated an issue was brought up at the last School Committee meeting for more clarity on the item within the policy concerning notarizing of affidavits “outside of District”. Revisions will be made to address this.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion to move School Admissions Policy (JEC) to a second reading of the full committee pending revisions; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

(Paul S. left the meeting at 8:10 p.m.)

Subcommittees of the School Committee (BCE-R)

Bill O. cited two minor smithing changes from the Personnel/Contract Negotiations Subcommittee and the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee. Lynn W. would like to see consistency in grammar tense throughout the policy.

Policy BCE-R will be carried over to the next meeting to review Wellness Committee and Policy Subcommittee portions.

Policy Review List

No discussion

Future Agenda Items

- **Subcommittees of the School Committee (BCE-R)**
- **Policy Review List**

Next meeting will be held on January 6, 2013

Adjournment

MOTION: At 8:16 pm Diana C. motioned to adjourn; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

/kd